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ABSTRACT

Covering teaching, learning activities on the pre-college level, this document reviews more than 200 published articles, chapters, and monographs to examine ideas held by those who teach history. Descriptive statements representing goals, objectives, and rationales relative to history were constructed for the purpose of examining these concepts. Ten "generic" infoschemata developed by educators and historians about the teaching of history were identified. The infoschemata include: the conception of history as a process; the conception of history as historical mindedness and the fostering of a historical perspective; the conception of history as knowledge acquisition; the conception of history as the study of human action and humankind; the conception of history as citizenship transmission; the conception of history as understanding society and the present; the conception of history as values development; the conception of history as conveyance of cultural heritage; and the conception of history as study of special groups. Many educators built these concepts of history around what students or teachers should have to do in the classroom and neglect what students can do on their own. (NL)

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ELEMENTS OF INFOSCHEMATA AND COGNITIVE-BELIEFS OF HISTORIANS AND HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATORS AS REFLECTED IN THE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND AIMS THEY POSIT FOR "HISTORY" AND THE "STUDY OF HISTORY" ON THE PRE-COLLEGE LEVEL

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The information-constructivist framework is not limited in its application to how individuals examine, interpret and explain the past (Stahl, 1990). Historians and educators have generated and constructed a wide range of purposes, reasons and expectations related to the role of history courses and learning in and about the history on the precollege level (Chilcoat, 1985). Each of these purposes, reasons and expectations represent their personal conceptions and perceptions of history - as a discipline, as a field of inquiry, as a body of knowledge, as a course of study, and as any of hundreds of other things that are part and parcel of what they and others include in their view of "history." There are almost as many conceptions and perceptions as there are individuals who form them. That this is so is very consistent with the information-constructivist perspective (Stahl, 1990; Stahl and Casteel, 1990). Descriptions and justifications for their conceptions and perspectives of "history" are most evident in the statements of goals, purposes, objectives and rationales they have generated via various publications. In one real sense, these published papers allow us to study elements of the infoschemata and cognitive-beliefs individuals have constructed, stored, reinforced, and used relative to "history" both in and outside of school settings.

After a review of over 200 published articles, chapters, books and monographs to find statements reflecting the conceptions held by advocates of history courses, teaching, learning and activities on the pre-college level, ten broad classes of descriptive statements representing the myriad of goals, purposes, objectives and rationales relative to history were constructed by the researchers. The intent of this paper is to provide the results to date of this inquiry.

The remainder of this paper describes each of the ten classes which we consider to be representations of 10 "generic" infoschemata which educators and historians have constructed about "history." These are heuristic constructs for the

purpose of description and do not represent absolute infoschemata or the only infoschemata which exist. They do, however, provide us with ways to consolidate and talk about the divergent conceptions and beliefs which have been invented and are held and advocated.

Among the most important findings is that these conceptions rarely specify or even concern themselves with goals, outcome abilities or perspective students are to acquire and make permanent as a a direct result of instruction in and about history. Often they are limited to what students should be doing within instructional settings, what materials they should be using, what subject matter content they should be studying and learning, and/or what may or may not be provided in the learning environment. In addition, their conceptions may include statements of basic assumptions that are made relative to what "history" or the "study of history" will do or will accomplish.

In the publications reviewed, it was not uncommon to find a great deal of information concerning what should and should not be included or done in "history" classrooms to study "history" and little mention of what students were to be like on their own after all instruction was done. It would seem that many educators construct their conceptions of "history" around what students or teachers should have and do in classrooms with an almost total neglect of what student should be able to do on their own after all their "learning of and in history" has ended for a course or unit.

The pages that follow represent our finding to date.

A) Conception of History as [a] Process

Individuals who perceive history is [a] process believe that students need to leave history courses with a working knowledge of how historians "do" history and be

able to use these "processes" on their own. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **<u>regarding basic assumptions</u>: This conception assumes that**

a. history is a special form of reason with a unique combination of science (using aspects of the scientific method) and of art (providing students with the opportunity to learn empathy in conforming the everyday experiences of historical people).

b. the knowledge explosion has necessitated that students need a way or method in which to learn how to learn, to choose only that knowledge that would be the most beneficial to an individual student during any given time or situation.

c. history itself provides an intrinsic stimulus for motivating interest.

d. the problems of the historian doing major research and of a younger student analyzing a family line are the same.

e. the nature of the problems face, the kinds of evidence, and the method of presentation of the results are philosophically and practically the same, differing only at the level of abstraction.

f. the same intellectual cast, the same point of view, and the same philosophical task are valid in approaching any historical problem at any level.

g. the effective way to teach historical method is through real life historical problems to be solved.

h. a person will become a better, well-rounded citizen by using a process of thinking used by historians.

II) **<u>regarding specific student outcome abilities, perspectives or states of being</u>:** Students will be able to :

a. use the "processes of historians."

III) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. emphasize an active "hands-on" orientation toward studying the past as opposed to passive learning.

b. encourage each student to:

- rely on his/her own application of methodology.
- draw and test his/her own conclusions separate from those already formulated by others including teachers, historians, and textbooks.
- transfer the learning process from historical situations to his/her own present-day social dilemmas.
- develop attributes of sensitivity to discrepancy, awareness of uncertainty and disagreement, and a healthy skepticism.
- identify assumptions.
- ponder alternatives.
- examine the complex nature of significant events.
- be conscious or multiple causation.
- be cautious of simple explanations.

c. stimulate students to demonstrate imagination and creativity in such skills as posing significant questions, locating appropriate data, subjecting that information to critical analysis, synthesizing these diverse materials, and expressing the results in articulate, convincing, oral or written presentation.

d. foster:

- an open classroom climate that encourages broad student participation and the expression of divergent points of view.
- the study and challenge of open experimentation and reconstruction of judgments made by historians and others that have effected society and/or the ideas of others.

e. focus the teacher to become a participant in exploring historical problems and a functionary in (a) creating the conditions from which a problem may develop, (b) having materials and resources available to research the problem, and (c) through questions encouraging students to consider all possible alternatives and gather sufficient evidence on which to resolve the problem.

f. stem from the desire to help students maximize their autonomy by learning how to discover things for themselves and by acquiring a cognitive structure from which they can relate the past to the present.

iv) <u>regarding what students should do and have</u>: Students should:

a. use original documents and sources, such as diaries, letters, logbooks, traveler's accounts, thereby maintaining the function of historical content as used only to provide information and materials on which the student can practice the process of inquiry and historical method.

B) <u>Conception of History as historical mindedness and fostering a historical perspective</u>

These individuals perceive history is [as] a habit of thinking that brings about a wholesome sophistication of being wise in the ways of society and a sensitivity to the human condition. History is conceived of as providing insight in making analytical and evaluative judgments and as presenting a more balanced and comprehensive view of a particular issue. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

i) <u>regarding basic assumptions</u>: This conception assumes that

a. history promotes attitudinal skills in learning patterns, establishing relationships, and developing points of view to apply knowledge of the past to form a balanced and comprehensive view of contemporary problems and issues.

b. through the course of adolescent development and maturation into adulthood, the student will eventually develop more on an appreciation and interest in the role of history.

c. to understand that inherently the past is ever present in every person or in his/her society, students need to study their past.

ii) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. encourage each student to:

- expose him/herself to such ideas as reference for truth, sensitivity to the human condition, and an honest understanding of the achievements and failures of human experience.
- make a personal commitment to seek knowledge and to develop and use historical information in one's evaluative process.

b. provide each student with opportunities to think about evidence by forming logical explanations and reasons about human conduct.

c. focus on the development of open-mindedness and on combating narrow, present-mindedness by examining and comparing interrelationships of one's own historical heritage with the heritage of others.

d. give teachers the flexibility to provide any number of historical experiences and situations to give students the background to make judgments and comparisons that transcend their immediate experiences.

e. emphasize that history is not a set of rigid principles but a provision of experiences and examples of alternatives for possible, probable, and feasible use.

C) <u>Conception of History as Knowledge Acquisition</u>

These individuals perceive history in light of their notion concerning the purpose for studying history which to them is simply to acquire knowledge. To

these educators and historians, historical knowledge is good for its own sake because it is self-justifying and self-validating. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **<u>regarding basic assumptions</u>: This concept assumes that**

a. the purpose of acquiring knowledge of history [or any subject] is simply to acquire knowledge for its own sake.

b. any history is good to study as it accomplishes both the development of one's mental faculties and the provision of a proper education.

c. a random supply of facts distinguishes students as educated in a quantitative sense.

d. the quality of one's thinking is ascribed to the quantity of facts mastered.

II) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. encourage each student to:

- accumulate facts and information which in turn (This conception assumes) will be applied at a later time in a student's life when necessity arises.
- organize facts by associating and tying together the basic components of a fact: a person, a date, a place, and an event.

b. emphasize:

- a sense of order and a sense of continuity.
- content per se as of primary importance focusing on lectures, homework assignments out of textbooks, class discussions, and examinations as a reflection of the teacher's commitment to facts as valued ends in themselves.

- the essence of the academic discipline of history which is to be found in its structure (which comprises its models and theories, its concepts, principles, laws, and/or generalizations, and its research methodologies and designs).

c. subscribe to the notion that learning is a mental exercise and is equated with the acquisition and mastery of facts.

d. stress the influence of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions have had on the course of events.

III) **regarding what students should do and have: Students should**

a. maintain a reliance upon authority for knowledge, thus supporting the position that academicians are the most appropriate group to develop curriculum products.

D) Conception of History as the study of human action and humankind

These individuals perceive that a quality that distinguishes history from other disciplines is its concern for human action. To them, history is the gaining of knowledge of the development of mankind and the understanding of human actions and capabilities. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **regarding curriculum and instruction: These need to**

a. encourage each student to follow patterns of behaviors, such as tolerance, empathy, and patience, that are exhibited through experience, wisdom, and customs.

b. acquaint students with their heritage as human beings; the variety of human experiences; and the role of man's aspirations.

c. emphasize the variety of human existence that includes all pertinent and enlightening factors affecting men and women's living behavior, such as their

goals, aspirations, reasons for taking actions, outlooks, bias, and frames of reference involving their political, economic, social, religious, scientific, esthetic, and intellectual life.

d. encourage the use of history as an instrument to search for the historicity of humankind in providing one a link with past human experience and help him/her to believe that his/her own relatively short span of life may have meaning of its own in relation to the generations past and to their contemporary experience.

e. foster the use of the classroom as a political tool for the understanding and the activation of human rights.

f. encourage the study of the fundamental determinants of human activity and behavior by examining how people made a living: their various political, religious, and social institutions; their values and attitudes; and their accomplishments and failures.

g. provide knowledge, examples, alternatives, and insights about how people blunderingly or successfully dealt with problems that may allow students to disentangle and comprehend their own problems.

h. subscribe to the conscious commitment to the welfare of humankind and its survival.

i. focus on the dignity and worth of human beings by expanding each students' personality, broadening his/her social consciousness and outgrowing his/her narrow limits of the "I," to be transcended into the real of the "We" awareness.

E) Conception of History as Citizenship Transmission

These individuals perceive that history supplies the foundation for good citizenship by providing the factual knowledge that educated citizens ought to be familiar with in order to conduct their lives well and to perform their public duties

effectively. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. encourage:

- the appreciation of patriotic ideals and beliefs.
- the study of heroes and heroic deeds as an inspirational force in the molding of the minds of youth.

b. is identified with traits such as obedience to community norms, tolerance for the rights of others, abiding by rules and laws, and maintaining an example in society in such a way as to make the country a better place in which to live.

c. emphasize:

- national rituals, such as patriotic public addresses and assemblies, respect for the flag, slogans, and patriotic songs, as a means of instilling emotional commitments to the nation and of perpetuating the general values of society.
- selected facts and events that enhance the glory of the United States through the study of early American history and Western culture; cultivates civic-minded behavior and intellectual training; and inspires patriotic enthusiasm.

d. focus on the meaning and perpetuation of national symbols, ceremonies, cultural heritage, traditions, customs, values, legends, fables, and myths for the development of character.

e. promote:

- participation and judgment processes in community, civic, and political affairs.
- sensitivity to the ideals of democracy.

- a commitment to the achievement of a society of liberty, equality and justice.
- development of such skills as voting, serving on juries, etc.; and such attitudes as a loyalty to values in maintaining an informed citizenry and a stable society.
- the teacher's function as describing events, people, phenomena, and ideas assumed to posses intrinsic importance to be learned by all students.

f. bolster a nationalistic and parochialistic identity through a study of a common past, a common memory, and a common heritage.

F) Conception of History as Understanding Society and the Present

These individuals perceive that history provides a general pattern of how society functions and develops. Cartwright (1960: 116), for instance, supports this conception by his claim that: "Only by studying the past can we learn the manner in which man arrived at his present social movement. And only in the light of such knowledge can we hope to direct our future course." The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information.

I) **regarding curriculum and instruction: These need to**

a. emphasize that one has a social life and needs to understand those factors which have shaped society so that he/she is able to cope with society intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

b. provide an opportunity for one to enhance the possibility of intelligent participation through the analysis of general patterns of how society functions and the gaining of an awareness of the interrelatedness of all individuals living within the confines of a structured society.

c. encourages the promotion of various character traits and values (e.g., development of a higher degree of objectivity, tolerance, breath, empathy, and the discouragement of self-righteousness, bigotry, demagoguery, jingoism, and militant nationalism) to permit students to deal with social issues.

d. promotes social thinking skills, such as

(a) selecting content from the past that has a direct bearing on social issues;

(b) choosing and organizing data of an historical situation in such a way that relationships between the past phenomenon and its present malfunction are highlighted;

(c) comparing and contrasting the past and present situations; and

(d) allowing students to discover similarities which exist between the past and the present.

e. encourage inquiry into the historical roots of how American society has arrived at its present state.

f. encourage the study of social change so that students are able to anticipate, understand, direct, evaluate, and live with it.

g. promote a process of rational inquiry to study social problems so that students

(1) sense that a problem exists;

(2) define the problem in specific terms;

(3) consider plans for study and action;

(4) collect and interpret pertinent information;

(5) reach a tentative conclusion; and

(6) take action consistent to the decision reached. (see McCutchen, 1963)

G) Conception of History as Value[s] Development (or as a developer of values in those who study and "know" it)

These individuals perceive that historical study can help one develop a system of personal values and a set of private and public principles. In this conception, history becomes the central discipline to one searching for the meaning and values of life. To some who perceive history in this way, "history is the moral philosophy for the ordinary man" (Nadel, 1963: 157). The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. encourage each student to engage in a process requiring them to examine value conflict situations, consider alternatives, and consequences, and then attempt to make a rational decision based on the best available information.

b. seek to have each student become aware of and identify their own values, to discuss them openly and honestly with other, and the flexibility to alter them.

c. foster an open, value-free classroom conducive to nonjudgmental discussion and investigation.

d. provide each student with the understanding of how values influence the decision-making process both in historical and contemporary situations.

e. revolve around the development of actual or fictional historical vignettes that incorporate value or moral conflicts.

f. stress that history is a moral enterprise.

<u>I) Conception of History as Conveyance of Cultural Heritage</u>

These individuals perceive that history is justified as the key to the conveyance of culture from generation to generation. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **<u>regarding basic assumptions</u>: This conception assumes that**

a. history is the record of society's development, therefore, it becomes a profound analytical tool for understanding culture.

b. history provides a laboratory of materials to gain an understanding of structural perspectives through culture.

c. history studies "time" in order to set the location and distribution of social phenomena.

d. if society is to be maintained and assured continuity, a major portion of its cultural heritage has to be transmitted to the younger generations.

e. the public school is the key to the transmission of the cultural heritage from one generation to another.

II) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. present a nationalistic slant that a given national system is the ideal.

b. foster and cultivate the awareness of the rich heritage which is uniquely nationalistic.

c. provide each student with opportunities to be inducted into meaningful roles in society by studying traditions, myths, customs, and values.

d. promote teacher authority and maintain the teacher's responsibility to have students compare ideas, objects, events, and practices to the established cultural ideal.

<u>J) Conception of History as Study of Special Groups (e.g., women, blacks, Native Americans, ethnic, racial, cultural groups, children)</u>

These individuals perceive that history teaches the contributions of various ethnic and minority groups. History helps one to become ethnically literate so that s/he can understand and cope with the pluralistic society in which s/he lives. Two major groups, women and blacks, are featured here to represent the content and nature of conceptions with this emphasis. The infoschemata they have constructed in alignment with this notion tend to contain the following sorts of information:

I) **<u>regarding basic assumptions</u>: This conception assumes that**

a. such studies will:

- promote the treatment of both women and men as partners in society, based on the belief that the history of humanity is no more man's than woman's.
- promote an awareness of the bias against women in American culture, such as the monolithic stereotype of the submissive female and the sexist attitudes advanced in textbooks.
- improve racial attitudes by repudiating the stereotyping of the black image and by realizing that racial stereotyping impedes the development of a constructive way of life in a pluralistic society.
- advance the building and fostering of black self-image, race pride, black nationalism, self-determination, and self-definition.
- encourage the study of cultural roots in Africa with various forms of ritualistic songs, ceremonies, and dress.
- promote group solidarity and community involvement by building a viable consciousness of the black community, augmenting their individual functions in the community.

b. public schools assume the role and responsibility to help society with resolving gender and racial problems.

II) **<u>regarding curriculum and instruction</u>: These need to**

a. encourage each student to study the female experience, such as those experiences shared commonly by both men and women, and those experiences unique to women that for the most part are not share by or with men.

b. include a variety of methods, such as the use of music, art, and literature, to teach feminine history.

c. encourage teachers to review with their students the idea of historical commentators on the broader issues of civil liberty and social equality.

d. encourage each student to develop a basis by which s/he can resolve social issues through social action to benefit women in society.

e. illuminates the ties that bind men and women together and requires students to learn more about the general features of American history.

f. emphasize knowledge and understanding that blacks were and are active participants in the American past paralleling the experiences of white America.

g. foster the study of black problems such as discrimination, white racism, consumer exploitation, and poverty.

h. promote the development of skills such as decision-making and social action, so that problems associated with race can be resolved.